

THE

HISTORIAN

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

September 1998

SEPTEMBER HAPPENINGS

The September meeting of the Hancock County Historical Society will be held at noon on Thursday, September 17 at the Kate Lobrano House, Bay Saint Louis.

June Ames will be the guest speaker. She is currently teaching the Genealogy course at the Hancock High School Adult Continuing Education Program and is the director of the Gorman Library in Slidell.

Call 467-4090 for luncheon reservations at \$6.00. Please call early to assure your reservation and to help us plan setting.

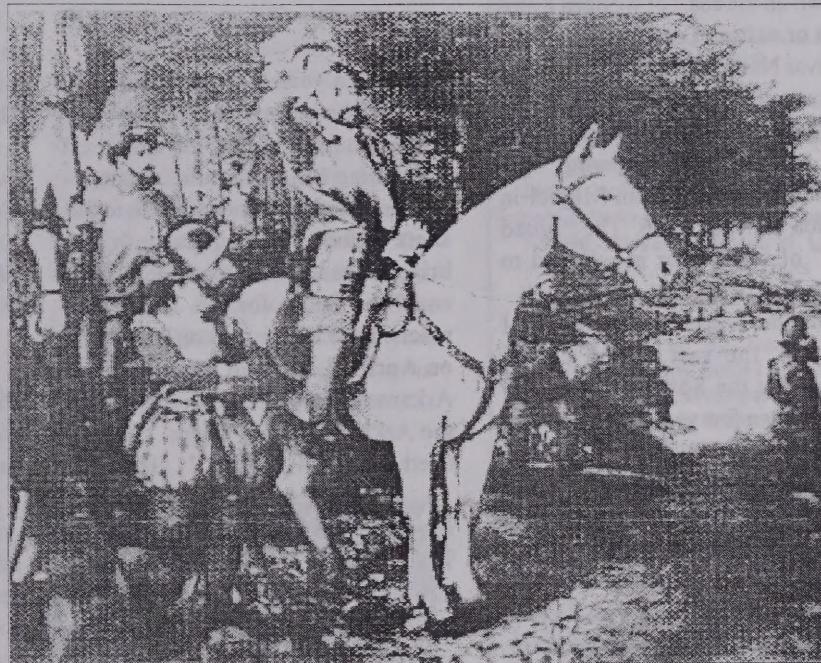
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It gives me great pleasure to announce that we have finally caught up on the back orders for *The First 300 Years*. We have printed, bound and delivered more than 780 copies which completes the first edition. There will be an advertisement in this *Historian* covering the second edition, its availability and cost.

Shirley Von Planta brought some photographs of the Dielman Center (1959) which contain excellent views of the buildings from the pier. Please remember to bring in photos for us to copy.

Mrs. Paul (Lucy Weston) Lacoste sent us a delightful cook book which was dedicated to her aunt, Mrs. Leo Seal, Sr. The cook book was made and sold on May 10, 1967 by the

(See President Page 2)



Hernando De Soto gazes upon the Mississippi River

Courtesy, Mississippi Department of Archives and History

EARLY SPANISH EXPLORERS OF THE COAST

Ponce de Leon, the first Spaniard to land in our region, discovered Florida in 1512, but there were no attempts at colonization.

In 1528 Parfilo De Narvaez, granted Florida as far as the Rio de las Palmas by the Spanish crown, landed near Pensacola Bay and proceeded inland with 300 followers.

Disillusioned by the failure to find riches, Narvaez and his men returned to the Coast, arriving at Bahia de los Caballos. There they built five crude ships and set out for Mexico.

Hernandez de Biedma, a member

of de Soto's expedition ten years later, in his narrative of the De Soto expedition, wrote of Narvaez "We recognized the spot on which he had built his smithy and saw a great quantity of horses' bones scattered about." This point is believed to be the site of the present town of St. Marks on Apalachee Bay. Here Narvaez embarked the miserable remnants of his troops on Sept. 22, 1528 in his five frail boats and coasted west for 30 days, landing occasionally to take on food and water and meeting fierce opposition from the natives of the Coast.

On Oct. 31 they came to "a broad river pouring into the gulf

such a volume of water that it freshened the brine so that we were able to drink it; but the current was too strong for their clumsy craft. The boat commanded by Narvaez was never heard of," Biedma wrote. Another boat was wrecked at the same point and the three others were thrown on the coast of western Louisiana or eastern Texas.

Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, the treasurer of Narvaez's expedition, and three others were the sole survivors. After years of wandering, they reached the town of San Miguel in Sinoloa in April 1536. The "broad river" of fresh water is believed to be the Mississippi.

After the disastrous expedition of Narvaez, the vast region called Florida by the Spaniards was neglected for a few years. The Spanish imagination, however, was much inflamed by the wealth found in Mexico and Peru, and the next to try his fortune was Hernando de Soto, the son of an esquire of Xerez de Badajoz, who had been with Pizarro in the conquest of Peru, eager to rival the exploits of Cortes and Pizarro.

In 1537 De Soto obtained a grant of the province from Florida to the Rio de las Palmas, as ceded to Narvaez. He was required to conquer and occupy Florida within a year, erect fortresses and carry over at least 500 settlers to hold the country. Provision was made for the division of gold, pearls and other valuables of the conquered chiefs, and provision was also made for the maintenance of the Christian religion and of a hospital in the territory.

De Soto set sail from Spain in 1538 with an ample armament and in 1539 landed at the Bay of Espiritu Santo (Tampa Bay) so-called because he reached it on the Feast of Pentecost. He had with him 620 chosen men and declared that the enter-

prise was undertaken for God alone.

He traversed with his army great portions of Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee and Mississippi, and in the third year of his wandering, reached what he had long sought - the Mississippi - known to him as the Rio del Espiritu Santo, a name it retained for more than 130 years.

After a year of futile wandering through the vast regions to the west of the Mississippi, De Soto despaired of finding his El Dorado in that direction and determined to push to the shore of the gulf. There he built two brigantines in order to send to Cuba and New Spain for aid. He finally reached the Mississippi on his return on April 17, 1542 in the vicinity of Arkansas City, a few miles south of the Arkansas River. There he sickened and died on May 21, 1542.

De Soto's successor, Luis de Moscosco, after a long march into Texas finally returned to the Mississippi and conducted the miserable remnant of the expedition down that river in brigantines to the Gulf and thence to Mexico.

The expedition of De Soto was comparatively barren of results and added very little to the knowledge of the continent, as no steps were taken to note the topography of the country or the languages of the various tribes.

After De Soto's death, no further efforts were made by Spain to explore the great central basin of the continent. It remained an unknown region for more than a century. In the meantime France had planted colonies on the St. Lawrence and her adventurous pioneers and priests had penetrated to the great river which De Soto had discovered. In seeking to extend the power and dominion of France, her representatives turned their eyes to the great valley of the south, and Robert Cavalier de La

Salle was selected to explore and take possession of the country in the name of the King of France.

The great explorer descended the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico, and on April 9, 1682 took formal possession of the country and named it Louisiana in honor of Louis XIV.

The first settlement in Louisiana by the French was made on Mississippi soil by Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville on Feb. 13, 1699.

(Sources: Cain, Cyril E., *Four Centuries on the Pascagoula*, Spartanburg, S.C. 1983, The Reprint Company; Rowland, Dunbar, *Encyclopedia of Mississippi*, Madison, Wisc., Selwyn A. Brant, 1907.)

President from page 1

Newcomer Club as its first fund raising event.

Earl E. "Buck" Ladner sent us a complete copy of the April 20, 1928 edition of the Kiln High School newspaper, *The Mill Whistle*. Mr. Ladner has provided us with numerous photographs, documents and other bits of memorabilia which we greatly appreciate.

Ruth Good donated a set of porch and garden furniture to the Lobrano House. Now if only someone will do something about the weather...

I had the pleasure of addressing a teacher's conference at NASA on September 9th. Many of the teachers were from Slidell or Pearl River County and several of them made inquiries about bringing their classes to visit the Lobrano House. Introducing children to Hancock County History is always great.

The Historical Society's election of board members will be held in November. Please let us know if you are interested in serving on the board or a committee so that your name can be added to the ballot.

Charles Gray

HALLOWEEN HAPPENINGS

It's almost time for our annual Cedar Rest Cemetery Tour. There's lots to be done to get ready for another successful event. We need lots of volunteers to do lots of different jobs. If you are interested in volunteering for any of the following, please call the Kate Lobrano House at 467-4090.

We need volunteers to "act" or portray our featured characters. Any one interested in putting on a costume and delivering a prepared script of just two or three lines will be sure to have a lot of fun on Halloween night.

We need volunteers to act as "guides" to escort our guests through the cemetery tour. Guides will be needed between the hours of 5 - 8 P.M.

We need volunteers to hostess at the Kate Lobrano House where we will be serving refreshments during the hours of 5 - 8 P.M.

And speaking of refreshments, we need donations of cookies, cupcakes, candy, etc. to serve all those hungry guests.

We need donations of clean, empty 2-liter clear soda pop bottles. The tops of the bottles will be cut off and the bottles will be filled with sand to hold the votive candles. You can drop off bottles at the Kate Lobrano House anytime. If the office is closed, you can leave them on the porch.

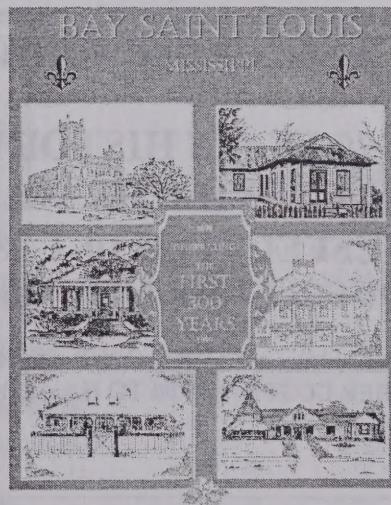
There will be approximately 300 of these candle holders. We need 300 votive candles to put inside. If you have any extra votive candles that you wish to donate, bring them to the Kate Lobrano House anytime.

You will be able to pick up Cemetery Tour Publicity posters after October 1st. If you have friends or businesses in your neighborhood who will display them, come by the office and pick up as many as you need. We want to see lots of our posters around town.

There is always some job that needs to be done. If you want to help in any way, call us at 467-4090. After the cemetery tour is over, we hold a party at the Kate Lobrano House for all our volunteers. It is one of the best parties in town. Don't be left out!

First 300 Years

Sales of our book the *First 300 Years* have been great. Next month we will be placing books for sale in several shops and businesses. The price for the book will be \$13 for everyone. We will be discontinuing the member discount effective October 1, 1998. If you haven't yet purchased your copy, stop by the Kate Lobrano House and pick up your book and take advantage of your member discount.



Book Signing Party

The Hancock County Historical Society will be holding a book signing party for Charles Gray and the *First 300 Years* on Thursday, October 15, 1998 from 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. at the Kate Lobrano House. Books will be available for purchase.

If you have already purchased a book, bring it with you and have Charles sign your copy. These books will become collectors items. In order to receive your member discount, send us your check for \$10 and pick up your book at the gala book signing party. Charles and his staff have worked very hard to publish this wonderful reference book. Every student in Hancock county should have a copy.

NEW MEMBERS

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 Glen Ford, Picayune, MS
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THE

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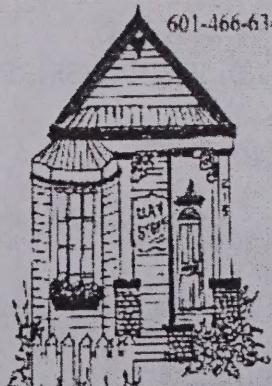
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